

**INQUIRY INTO PERFORMANCE OF THE NSW
ENVIRONMENT PROTECTION AUTHORITY**

Name: Name suppressed

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Partially Confidential

29 August 2014

The Hon. Robert Brown MLC
Chair, General Purpose Standing Committee No 5 Legislative Council
NSW Parliament, Macquarie Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

cc: Jamie Parker MP, Member for Balmain

Dear Chair

RE: Submission to Inquiry into the performance of the NSW Environmental Protection Authority

We are writing in response to the Inquiry's terms of reference in 1.(b)(v) in relation to the environmental impact and regulation of the cruise passenger ships at White Bay Cruise Ship Terminal at Balmain.

We have previously written to the Sydney Ports Authority on numerous occasions to report instances of noise and toxic air pollution that have made living here a nightmare. We have not been satisfied with the responses that we have received so far as the clear message is that the ships are here to stay and the current legislation does not require much if any regulation of the comings and goings of these ships nor of their proximity to domestic housing. Our house is located directly behind one of the sites which is primarily used for heavy fuel or chemical offloading which often occurs in the middle of the night. This is because we have been told that there are no regulations that prevent the current 24 hour per day use of such vessels which often involves alarms, pumping sounds, loud engines, strong vibrations that disturb sleep and make windows vibrate alarmingly.

I have even sent video recordings of the loud vibrations to the Sydney Ports Authority which were basically ignored.

To summarise, our main objections to the current arrangements are:

- Excessive noise from motors, sirens, pumping sounds, reversing sounds of vehicles involved in loading or unloading materials from ships
- The type of (mostly old) ships used and the hazardous chemicals that they transport and offload so close to domestic living (our house is directly in line with these ships)
- The horrendous smell of fuel from the constantly running motors of these ships. If there was a powered site or semi-powered site, we would not have this problem.

Health issues:

As detailed in previous correspondence to all relevant parties, our family is suffering from the excessive noise and pollution in the following ways:

Noise and vibrations –

- causing insomnia for the whole family which in turn leads to stress from lack of sleep. Even this morning I was awoken at 5am by a ship directly in front of our house where a loud hammering noise was occurring. If this was a factory or airport it would be in breach of regulations and would be closed down. Why is this activity unregulated???
- migraines and headaches from the constant inescapable noise and vibrations of engines

Air pollution –

- Often the smell of toxic fumes is so bad that we cannot open any windows or doors in the house and cannot sit outside on our balcony nor enjoy our garden
- There is a visible layer of dust present on the plants on days when ships are parked in front of our house which is not there when they are not
- My son is now suffering from severe asthma which he had no symptoms of previously and may now require an operation to help his worsening respiratory condition
- There is a nice basketball court in Birrung Park adjacent to our house. Sometimes the air pollution from the ships in front of this is so bad that it makes going to the park to play sport an unhealthy pastime instead of the opposite.

I will not list all the toxic elements in the fuels that are being used by stationary ships at White Bay which are strictly banned by other countries if ships are in close proximity to domestic living areas, because these have been well documented and undisputed by many other people making submissions.

WE MUST CHANGE THE LAW TO PROTECT OUR HEALTH!!

The main question to ask is, “how much is our health worth to us?” I have been told on numerous occasions by the EPA and Sydney Ports Authority and also politicians some of whom feel powerless to do anything, that there is no way we can stop the ships but as Jamie Parker said “we should insist on regulating them” to ensure that minimum health standards are being met.

At the moment, everyone is merely looking to see if the ship companies are breaching current laws which have clearly been drafted in the broadest possible way so that it is almost impossible to breach. That is not the answer!!

What is the answer?

The answer is to do the following:

- Develop a powered site for all ships in the White Bay area
- To introduce controls on the type of fuel that can legally be used by ships that berth in close proximity to domestic housing
- To introduce controls on the activities that can be done by these shipping companies so that no loud noises such as sirens can be employed between the hours of at least midnight to 6am
- That new regulations are enforceable and are enforced to protect the health of everyone

At the moment the only issue seems to be how much money can be made by introducing as many ships as possible into the area simultaneously? Every objection to the above recommendations has been made on the basis of it costing too much to enforce or set up, but how much is our life worth?

Regards